I want to dedicate this documentary book to all freestyle staff and students for supporting me throughout this process.

Thank you to Eli Arbid, for supporting this documentary , and supporting me with info and insight into Maison Alzyee. I also want to thank Vera Ginzburg for giving me a customer's perspective into the french bakery.

A Slice of France

Preface:

When I first began this documentary, I would have been surprised about the final product that I would eventually create. Not because of quality, but because of its focus. I set out intending to create a documentary on a small Parisian bakery in downtown Mountain View. My hometown, where I've lived my entire life. A bakery I've sat in for hours and passed by every day on my way home from school as a kid. And as I continued researching and writing, I realized that this bakery reflected something bigger than just pastries and coffees, (although they were incredibly delicious). This bakery reflected the greater themes of immigration and culture as a whole. How immigrants come to the U.S. wanting to preserve their culture and share it with others, as well as the challenges that come from competing industrialized businesses. As I continued to explore, I learned so much about culture, preservation, and community.

Creating this documentary was an incredibly rewarding experience. It challenged my initial assumptions, challenged me to look deeper, and helped me grow as a story teller, and a researcher. I really enjoyed creating this documentary, and I hope you love it just as much as I do.

Introduction

Before Maison Alyzzee opens its doors , the patisserie is already wide awake. The lights are on, the ovens are hot, and the work has already begun. At the center of it all is Eli Arbid the manager of Quality and French experience , and the backbone of it all.
From the early hours of the morning, long before the first customer arrives.
Eli is already baking to prepare for the rest of the day. The process starts when most of the city is still sleeping. By the time morning rolls around, the beautiful pastries have already taken hours of work behind the scenes. When 9 am finally hits, on this quiet street in Mountain View, the small french bakery has a line out the door almost every morning. Unlike most of Silicon Valley, nothing feels rushed. People sit for hours, watching others pass by, and sipping their coffee slowly, staying longer than planned. Some come alone, others meet friends, and some over time become regulars.

But this place is more than just a bakery. It's a piece of another world, one brought here by immigrants trying to recreate something they left behind. Not just food, but a way of living. A way of interacting with people. A way of experiencing everything that doesn't revolve around speed. For many many immigrants, the goal isn't just to succeed financially, it's to preserve something.
A memory

A culture

A standard of how things are done.

In a place like Mountain View, where businesses often grow fast and scale quickly, that intention stands out.

Businesses like Maison Alyzee do things differently . They rely on people, not systems to create their experience. And because of that they create something large businesses can't.
Connection.
A sense of place,

CHAPTER 1 - BRINGING FRANCE TO CALIFORNIA

In France, cafes are not just a place to grab food quickly. They are spaces where people sit for hours, read newspapers, talk about ideas, and exist together. In Mountain view , it's the complete opposite, faster is better. So the Maison Alyzee team decided to bring it to California. Everything reflects that intention. The layout includes a terrace, similar to those found in Paris. The food is made fresh daily, often starting in the early morning.A large chain was never in the team’s agenda. Instead, the focus has been staying local, and maintaining authenticity. In countless ways, this bakery is an extension of France. But authenticity doesn't come easily, especially so far from its home. For Eli, recreating France is far from just recipes,

“We don't freeze anything. We make everything fresh, every morning ” he explains.

Most of the work begins before sunrise. By the time customers arrive, the pastries have already seen hours of preparation.

If it doesn't sell, it gets given away.
Even the ingredients reflect that commitment. THe butter is important from France. Chocolate comes from Europe. Other ingredients are sourced locally, but always chosen carefully.
The balance between tradition and adaptation shows something deeper, the immigrant experience itself.

CHAPTER 2 - More than a bakery

Talking to Eli, the focus shifts away from the bakery itself, and more into what it represents. He does not explain things like your average “Pâtissier” or patisserie chef. There's no talk about scaling strategies or marketing plans. Instead , he talks about how people feel when they walk in, and how this space becomes part of people's routines.
The way he describes customers, is not describing customers at all. It's not transactional, he talks about them like he knows them, because he does. People who come in once a week, people who come in every day. People who bring their friends, people who sit alone for a while.

He talks about experience.
About how people come in , not just for the food , but how it feels to be there. He notices everything, the regulars , how often they come in, what they order, even how their mood changes day to day.

“What do you like today , what mood are you in?”

That question says more than anything, the business is about connection, not just being the best in town.

That's what separates small businesses. They know the people that walk in , people stay, talk, come back.

That's only possible with a smaller scale. In larger businesses systems are built to handle volume.

In a city where most things are built to grow as fast as possible, Maison Alyzee chooses not to.

CHAPTER 3 - As a whole

Maison Alyzee, is only one bakery, on one street, in one city. But its story represents something way bigger. Across the United States, immigrant owned small businesses are often built from more than just a business idea. They are built from memory, culture, sacrifice, and the desire to create a place that feels familiar in a country that may not always feel like home.
Maison alyzee does this through french pastries, imported ingredients, and the slower cafe experience it brings to Mountain View. Immigrant owned businesses often carry the traditions of an entire place through food, design, language, service, and atmosphere. They give a way for people to express culture without needing to travel there. They tell a story.
At the same time, these businesses face real challenges. Small businesses do not have the same resources as large chains. A chain only relies on systems, mass production, and brand recognition. While small businesses rely on people, the owner, the regular customers, and the

workers. This is what makes immigrant owned businesses so important. They are personal. They are shaped by the people that create them.

After talking to a regular of Maison Alyzee, a mom and a community member of Mountain view, Vera Ginzbourg, this became even clearer. She explained that she first came for the pastries, but kept returning because of the atmosphere. Unlike many coffee shops where people rush in and out, Maison alyzee encourages people to slow down. Over time, she began recognizing familiar faces, chatting with staff, and spending hours there working , reading, or meeting friends.

Her experience reflects something that happens in many immigrant- owned businesses. People may arrive because of the product, but they stay because of the community. Research shows that immigrant owned businesses play a significant role in local economies throughout the United States. According to the U.S. Small Business Administration, immigrants start businesses at higher rates than native - born Americans and contribute millions of jobs across the country.

Their impact goes beyond economics, many of their businesses preserve traditions and culture. Maison Alyzee demonstrates how culture can be shared through everyday experiences. Most customers may never even travel to Paris, but they can sit on the terrace and enjoy a croissant made from traditional methods, and experience a small part of French culture in their own neighborhood. In doing so, the bakery becomes more than a place to buy food. It becomes a bridge between cultures.

Research supports what businesses like Maison Alyzee demonstrate every day. A study published by researchers at Massachusetts Institute of Technology stated that immigrants in the United States are about 80% more likely to start business than native born Americans. The study also found that immigrant entrepreneurs create businesses of any size and contribute significantly to economic growth.

Conclusion

As the afternoon slows down and customers continue to fill in through the doors, the bakery remains exactly what it set out to be. Not a chain. Not a rapidly growing business. Just a small french bakery focused on authenticity.

What began as a documentary about pastries and coffee became a story about something much larger. It became a story about immigration , cultural preservation, and the role small businesses play in shaping communities. Through every fresh pastry, every conversation, with a regular customer, the bakery keeps a fresh piece of France available in the rapidly growing city of Mountain View.

As the city continues to grow and change, places like Maison Alyzée remind people that community is built slowly.

For many customers, Maison Alyzee is simply their favorite bakery. But its story reveals something much deeper than just that. The power of immigrant owned businesses to bring people together, one neighborhood at a time.